

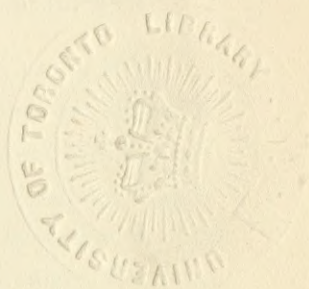
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1862—*Class of Sixty-Two*—1912
Harvard University
Fiftieth Anniversary

Address of


Henry Munroe Rogers

To the Alumni, Commencement, June 20, 1912



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With the Compliments of the
Class of Sixty-Two



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John Chipman Gray

President of the Alumni Association, said:

Most of us feel that black clouds are threatening the prosperity of our country, although we may not agree as to the quarter from which they are coming. But those of us who can remember the time about the election of Lincoln can recall a night blacker far. The country seemed perishing of dry rot. Yet when the class of 1862 was graduated, the country and the sons of Harvard were in arms, by sea and by land, in defense of the Constitution; and the dawn was breaking.

I will ask Mr. Henry M. Rogers to speak for the class of 1862.

Mr. Rogers

Spoke as follows:

Mr. President and Brethren of Harvard:

It has been said that the first seventy years of a man's life are his best years. The truth of this assertion I can neither affirm nor deny, for I am not far enough along on my second seventy years to give an opinion. But I can affirm, from experience, that the first *fifty* years after graduation are glorious years,—for each year has at least three hundred and sixty-five to-days, in which to play the great game of life, along the broad highway of endeavor, of duty, of achievement.

It is of the Class of '62 after its first fifty years that I am to speak:

At the outset let me disclaim the assumption that the Class of '62 is an exceptional class: I do not claim that: I only claim that the ninety-six men who composed it were exceptional men, born and living in exceptional times, and therefore as a class making an exceptional record.

We, like you, were graduated under the crimson banner inscribed with its eternal "Veritas". We, like you, regarded this "Veritas" complacently, even patronizingly, as a good motto, especially for dead men; a word to be engraved on mortuary monuments and college memorial tablets; it seemed to us a little old-fashioned for every-day use and not up to modern requirements; and so, in the libertinism and exaltation of youth, we went forth into the great world of action, of duty, seemingly unclothed.

We found a Nation in the throes and agonies of a great civil war,—fighting single-handed the battle for man, under the leadership of one Abraham Lincoln. In a day, what we had been reading about for a year became a vital fact,—a condition,—presenting a question to be settled by each individual then and there,—what is *my* duty,—what is *my* path of truth? And the answer given to that question made '62 a great war class,—for almost exactly forty per cent. of our number went into active service, and of them more than one-fourth died in service; and their names are enrolled on the tablets in yonder hall. "Veritas" had now become a living reality.

Lest ye forget, ye younger sons of Harvard, I present to you, out of the storehouse of my memory, two contrasted lives, both of the Class of '62.

The first, John Henry Tucker, born here in Cambridge, apprenticed to a carriage painter (though not by his own choice) and working at his trade, until his majority, but working always with one aspiration in his soul,—to go to Harvard and afterwards

to preach the gospel. He was of us, studied with us, graduated with us; and then, in the face of the question, where is my way of duty, my path of truth, he surrendered his aspirations and enlisted in the 38th Regiment of Mass. Volunteers, as a Private, and on the 27th of May, 1863, fell dead in the disastrous assault against the ramparts of Port Hudson: in ten months from his graduation he proved his fidelity to the Truth as he saw it.

In another part of the same field, Col. William Francis Bartlett, Chevalier sans peur and sans reproche, led his 49th Regiment of Mass. Volunteers to what seemed certain destruction: He had already lost a leg at Yorktown, and now,—at Port Hudson,—on this same 27th day of May, he went into the fight, the only mounted officer on either the Federal or Confederate side, and fell wounded again and yet again in this same assault, and was carried from the field. The next year he was wounded again and yet again; and when on that great 21st day of July, 1865, Commemoration Day, Harvard welcomed her sons home from the war, Bartlett, crippled, wounded, in leg, foot, arm and head, justified the introduction, "General William Francis Bartlett. The heart is left". Bartlett was not yet five and twenty years of age.

Tucker and Bartlett merely represented Harvard's "Veritas",—a thing to die for or to suffer for, as well as a thing to live for. Let it also be remembered, that Bartlett's record in peace excelled, if possible, his record in war, for he preached, the first of all, peace and reconciliation with the South.

Every son loves his mother and every son shows his love for her in his own way; and so with the sons of Harvard of the Class of '62.

Not only in the heat of battle did our men die or suffer for the truth as they saw it, but they also have lived for the truth, simply, unostentatiously, persistently, and as Preachers, and Teachers, and Professors, and Hymn writers, and Doctors, and Lawyers, and Business Men, they have all, not as saints, but as miserable sinners, with many failures and climbing on their despairs, done what they could for the truth,—for duty,—for Harvard,—and some of us are still working.

And so, my friends, we of '62 have come back to-day, after our fifty years of experience, bringing our gray hairs and our young hearts with us, to kneel once more for our mother's benediction, to declare anew our loyalty to her banner and to "Veritas", and to offer to her again and yet again our heart's best love in life and in death.